From *Armenian Constantinople*, Volume 9 in the series
Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces, edited by Richard G. Hovannisian
and Simon Payaslian (Costa Mesa, CA, 2010), Chapter 8, pp. 199-228.

❀ 8 ❀

CYRUS HAMLIN AND AMERICAN EDUCATION FOR ARMENIANS IN CONSTANTINOPLE

Barbara J. Merguerian

American missionaries entered the Middle East in the early decades of the nineteenth century with the grandiose purpose to Christianize the nations but with little in the way of concrete plans to accomplish their ends. It was clear from the beginning that education was to be an integral part of the work. But questions about the nature of that education, its level of achievement, its potential beneficiaries, and even the language of instruction were yet to be determined and in time became subjects of fierce controversy. One of the most outspoken participants in the debates over education, a man who was credited even by his strongest opponents as an exceptionally talented missionary teacher, was Cyrus Hamlin, who was assigned to Constantinople in 1838 specifically to establish a high school for Armenian youth. A towering figure of driving energy and multiple talents, Hamlin is best remembered as the founder and president of the first American institution of higher learning established abroad, Robert College (today, Boğaziçi University) in Constantinople. Hamlin's firm conviction that "the gospel of Christ could be better preached by deeds rather than words"[1] placed him at odds with his most of his colleagues, who believed that missionaries should confine their efforts to preaching. At the same time Hamlin's concern for the general welfare of the people and his advocacy of higher education with strict standards made him one of the most popular American missionaries among the Armenians.

---

[1] The quotation is from the memoirs of a subsequent president of Robert College, Caleb Frank Gates, *Not To Me Only* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 161.

The first American missionary station in Turkey was founded in Constantinople in 1831, one year after the United States established diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire. Through their earlier work in the Middle East, beginning in 1819 in Smyrna (Izmir) and then in Jerusalem and Beirut, the Americans had encountered social and legal barriers to their work among the Muslim peoples of the empire; they therefore turned their attention instead to the minority populations.

The first two missionaries accordingly had been instructed to work with the Greeks, Armenians, and Jews. Both men were somewhat familiar with the Armenians. The Reverend William Goodell had written a paper while still a student at Andover Theological Seminary on "Armenia as a Mission Field," in which he stressed the potential of the Armenians as co-workers in the missionary work, once their Church had been returned to what he believed to be its original and authentic state.[2] Later, he counted the Armenians among his most interested clients during the years he had spent as a missionary in Beirut. The junior missionary, the Reverend Harrison Gray Otis Dwight, had just returned from a sixteen-month exploratory trip surveying Armenian communities throughout Asia Minor, Russia, and Iran. Along with his fellow missionary Eli Smith, he published a fascinating account of their travels.[3]

Objectives of the American Mission to the Armenians

The missionary ideals were the apostles of the New Testament, and their motto was the biblical imperative to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark: 16:15). Such a romantic and utopian vision, however inspiring, was not very helpful for two well-educated Americans arriving in the mixture of peoples, cultures, and religions in the Ottoman capital, a situation made more difficult by the despotic and arbitrary government whose attitude was ambiguous at best. Goodell and Dwight contacted the Patriarch of the Armenian Church, met

---

[2] Goodell's paper was subsequently printed in the *Boston Recorder*, vol. 4, no. 10 (March 6, 1919).

[3] Eli Smith, *Researches of the Rev. E. Smith and Rev. H.G.O. Dwight in Armenia, Including a Journey through Asia Minor and into Georgia and Persia* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1833), 2 vols.

with him and other leaders, and discovered a reform movement that emphasized the need to raise the educational level of the clergy. The Americans enjoyed cordial relations with Armenian Church leaders at first. They concentrated on learning the local languages—for Goodell, Turkish (or more precisely Armeno-Turkish, the Turkish language written with Armenian letters) and for Dwight, Armenian. Their work was divided into two separate but related areas: publication of religious material in the local languages and educational programs for the native populations. Discovering that their educational efforts were meeting with a favorable response among the Armenians, the two missionaries petitioned their headquarters in Boston, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), to send out an educator capable of establishing a high school for Armenian youth. The Board responded by assigning the task to Cyrus Hamlin.[4]

In common with most of the missionaries, Hamlin came from a well-respected but not particularly wealthy family. Born in 1811 in Waterford, Maine, he lost his father when he was only a few months old and therefore was compelled, beginning at an early age, along with his older brother Hannibal, to help his mother run the family farm. The farm was almost entirely self-sufficient, so Cyrus and his brother had to learn how to perform all of the necessary chores. When Cyrus reached the age of sixteen, his mother decided to apprentice him to a silversmith in Portland, Maine, where he remained for two years, until one of the elders in the local Congregational Church, observing his debating skills, suggested that he enter the ministry. Upon reflection, Hamlin determined to pursue this course, but given his lack of a regular education, he had first to attend preparatory school

[4] On the establishment of the Constantinople mission, see Rufus Anderson, *History of the Missions of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to the Oriental Churches* (Boston: Congregational Publishing Society, 1872), 2 vols.; William E. Strong, *The Story of the American Board: An Account of the First Hundred Years of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1910). Among the published memoirs of early missionaries, see *Forty Years in the Turkish Empire: or, Memoirs of Rev. William Goodell, D.D.*, ed. E.D.G. Prime (New York: Robert Carter, 1877); H.G.O. Dwight, *Christianity Revived in the East; or, A Narrative of the Word of God Among the Armenians of Turkey* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1850); John B. Adger, *My Life and Times, 1810-1899* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1899).

before completing his studies at Bowdoin College and the Bangor Theological Seminary, both in Maine. He excelled in academic pursuits but retained for the rest of his life an interest and an ability in mechanical labor which he had acquired on the farm and during his apprenticeship. During his final year at the Seminary, 1836-37, Hamlin volunteered his services to the most prominent American missionary organization at the time, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. He imagined himself going to Africa, chose China as his second destination, but was not disappointed to find himself assigned to Turkey as a missionary to the Armenians. The next year he was married, ordained, and sent with his bride to the Ottoman capital.

The Hamlins arrived in Constantinople early in the year 1839, a particularly turbulent time for the Americans.[5] The Patriarch had issued an order banning his flock from the reading of evangelical literature or association with the missionaries, and the early cordial relations between the Americans and the leadership of the Armenian Church became transformed into intense hostility.[6] At first, Hamlin devoted his energies to learning the Armenian language. During his first months in Turkey, he had to engage three successive Armenian teachers: the first disappeared after several young men were arrested and thrown into jail upon the orders of the Patriarch because they had associated with the missionaries; the second was an Armenian who was banished to his native Russia but with Hamlin's help managed to escape to India; and the third was working with Hamlin when unexpectedly the American missionaries were ordered by the Ottoman government to leave the country.[7] While they awaited a response

---

[5] See Cyrus Hamlin, *My Life and Times* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1893); Marcia and Malcolm Stevens, *Against the Devil's Current: The Life and Times of Cyrus Hamlin* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988). Cyrus Hamlin's first cousin, Hannibal Hamlin, became vice president of the United States during the first term of Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865).

[6] The religious ferment of this period is captured in G.H. Chopourian, *The Armenian Evangelical Reformation: Causes and Effects* (New York: Armenian Missionary Association of America, 1972). A more general discussion is in Leon Arpee, *The Armenian Awakening* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908).

[7] Cyrus Hamlin, *Among the Turks* (New York: Robert Carter and Bros., 1878), pp. 30-39; Hamlin, *My Life*, pp. 184-88, 196-200. The best qualified of Hamlin's teachers, by far, was the second one, Mesrob Taliatine (also Talatyan or Taghiatiants), a Russian subject who had studied for the priesthood at the Holy See of Echmiadzin, then attended for six years Bishop's College in Calcutta, before coming to

to their appeal to the U.S. Department of State to clarify their status, the missionaries saw the situation in Turkey change abruptly: the Ottoman navy surrendered to Mohammed Ali of Egypt, the Ottoman army suffered a major defeat in Syria at the hands of the Egyptian army, and Sultan Mahmud II died. Distracted by these events, the government of the new young sultan, Abdul Mejid, did not enforce the expulsion of the Americans.[8] But the experience demonstrated the precarious position of the missionaries in Turkey.

After a lengthy search, Hamlin settled on a site for the boys' high school in the suburb of Bebek, about 5 miles out of the center of the city, on the European side of the Bosphorus. The boarding school, known as Bebek Seminary, was opened in 1840, and housed between twenty and fifty students, the majority of whom were Armenians. At times, there was a Greek section, and occasionally a Turkish or Jewish student would be admitted. Hamlin's repeated proposals to expand the school, up to a hundred students, were turned down by economy-minded superiors in Boston. Local circumstances forced the school to close on several occasions, as during the events associated with excommunication of the evangelicals by the Armenian Church in 1846, but Hamlin waited for the storm to pass and quietly reopened the school.[9]

Constantinople to participate in the Armenian reform movement. Following his escape from Turkey in 1839, Taliatine returned to India, where he had an outstanding career as a journalist and educator. See *Sovetakan Haykakan Hanragitaran* [Soviet Armenian Encyclopedia], vol. 4 (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1978), p. 131, which does not, however, mention Taliatine's brief association with the American missionaries. See also Khachig Tölölyan's article about Taliatine, "Textual Nation: Poetry and Nationalism in Armenian Political Culture," in *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Michael D. Kennedy (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp. 79-102.

[8] The American minister in Constantinople, Commodore David Porter, was of the opinion that since the treaty between the United States and the Ottoman Empire was a commercial one, therefore the missionaries did not enjoy any particular right to protection. At the insistence of the missionaries, this opinion was appealed to Washington, where Secretary of State Daniel Webster issued a strong statement affirming the rights of the American missionaries to protection equal to that of the European Catholic missionaries, under the "most favored nation" provision of the treaty. Hamlin, *Among the Turks*, pp. 37-40; Hamlin, *My Life*, pp. 196-99.

[9] Frank Andrews Stone, *Academies for Anatolia: A Study of the Rationale, Program and Impact of the Educational Institutions Sponsored by the American Board in Turkey* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984), pp. 54-55.

Educational Philosophy and Unintended Consequences

Hamlin modeled the curriculum of the seminary on American college-preparatory schools but with some modifications; for example, instead of teaching classical Latin and Greek, he stressed modern and classical Armenian, Turkish, and English. Initially the aim of the school was to provide a Protestant education and to prepare teachers for the rapidly growing number of missionary schools in the capital and the provinces. With the establishment of the Armenian Evangelical Church in 1846, a major goal became the preparation of preachers and pastors for the new parishes.[10] The principles of education that the American missionaries stressed evolved from their basic religious philosophy: that the only road to salvation was to read the Bible, particularly the Gospels, and to live according to its precepts. Knowledge of the Bible was the duty of every person, who stood in a direct relationship with the Creator; in this view there was no one—no clergyman, no bishop, no person in authority—standing between the individual and God.

This philosophy demanded, first of all, that copies of the Bible and religious literature be available to all, in a language easily read and understood. A fundamental precept of the ABCFM was that its missionaries were to work in the local languages. This posed a problem for the Armenian programs. Up to this time, the literary language among the Armenians was the classical *grabar* (*krapar*), and its use was limited to a small educated elite consisting mainly of the higher clergy.[11] Such a situation was unacceptable to the Americans, and their immediate goal became the transformation of the vernacular Armenian spoken in Constantinople into a literary language. Reporting to his missionary sponsors at home in 1840, Hamlin asserted that modern Armenian had "neither dictionary, grammar, nor law" and summarized the linguistic situation as follows:

---

[10] Annual reports of Bebek Seminary can be found in the Archives of the ABCFM at Houghton Library, Harvard University. See ABC 16.7.1, Mission to the Armenians, vols. 3-5, 8-9.

[11] Vahé Oshagan, "Modern Armenian Literature and Intellectual History from 1700 to 1915," in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times,* Richard G. Hovannisian, ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 152-56; Crosby H. Wheeler, *Ten Years on the Euphrates, or Primitive Missionary Policy Illustrated* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1868), pp. 114-15.

> The modern Armenian has entirely lost its ancient beautiful and philosophical structure. Its idioms and its collocations of words are entirely Turkish. Its grammatical structure is broken up and marred by the introduction of Turkish and Persian peculiarities. Its use of tenses, cases, prepositions and other particles is completely Turkish, and the opposite of what the genius of the language demands. Many of the words in common use are borrowed from the Turkish. . . . But it is not only necessary to study the Turkish, it is equally necessary to study the ancient Armenian, which contains nearly all the literature of the nation, and from which the modern tongue must be enriched and improved.[12]

Hamlin and the other missionaries intensified their efforts to translate and publish material in modern Armenian, beginning with the Bible. Working with Armenian assistants, they purged the language of foreign words and made every effort to develop the grammar in a regular fashion. Some of the earliest published works in modern Western Armenian came from the missionary presses. The literary development of the vernacular, or spoken, language became an issue of great contention among Armenian intellectuals during the nineteenth century, and the missionaries were not its only advocates.[13] However, they were among the earliest to promote Western Armenian as a literary language and remained always its strong supporters. Looking back in 1893, Hamlin observed how rapidly the Western Armenian had developed: "The modern Armenian is now wholly transformed; it has become a beautiful and cultivated language. The books and translations presented fifty years ago are considered obsolete unless they have been carefully reedited. The Bible has gone through repeated revisions to keep it up with the growth of the lan-

---

[12] ABCFM, *Annual Report of the ABCFM Presented at the 31st Annual Meeting Held in the City of Providence, R. I. September 9, 10, and 11, 1840* (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1840), p. 90.

[13] The first literary work published in Western Armenian was a translation by Minas Pzhshkian of *Robinson Crusoe*, printed in 1817. See Marc Nichanian, "Minas Pzhshkian and the 'History of Pontus'," paper presented at the Conference on the Armenian Communities of the Black Sea-Pontus Region, UCLA, May 4-5, 2002. Pzhshkian's publication was useful for the early missionaries studying the Armenian language. Abbott Mekhitar had earlier published a small grammar of Western Armenian, and in 1828 Hovhannes Zohrabian had published a Western Armenian version of the New Testament under the auspices of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

guage."[14] Summarizing his views on the subject (and indirectly answering those who criticized his advocacy of using the English language in secondary and higher education), Hamlin asserts in his memoirs:

> One's native language, his mother tongue, must be his chief instrument of thought and expression. Our course gave a great impulse to the cultivation of the Armenian language. We found it clay and iron, and we left it gold. I only claim that the seminary at Bebek had a part and an honorable part in the renaissance of the language. The entire influence of the mission went in that direction.[15]

The missionary support for the development of modern Western Armenian contributed to the rise of Armenian nationalism, but this was an unintended consequence. The motivation of the missionaries came from their conviction that one's religion should be expressed in one's native language. Indeed, in those areas where most Armenians spoke Turkish (for example, in the Cilician centers of Marash and Aintab), missionary programs were carried out primarily in Armeno-Turkish. The insistence on instruction in the student's native language was a first principle of American education in the Ottoman Empire, as in all mission stations at that time.

The second distinguishing feature of American evangelical education was again based on religious principles: that everyone should reach an elementary level of knowledge sufficient to study the Bible with comprehension. The required skills were reading, writing, arithmetic, and a basic understanding of the natural laws of the universe. Through their classrooms and instructional material for students of all ages, the missionaries supported universal education. Indeed, as most of their clients came from the middle class or the poorer members of the community, who had nothing to lose by associating with the Americans, the missionary programs had tremendous political and social implications. The goal may have been to make the Bible accessible to all people, but the effect was to create a large, educated Armenian reading public that could benefit not only from the new religious texts but also from the secular literature

[14] Hamlin, *My Life*, p. 211.
[15] Ibid., p. 250.

that was appearing in the community. The idea that everyone is equal before God, the emphasis on reading and interpreting the Bible for oneself and not accepting authority blindly, the attention paid to the lower classes, all are consistent with democratic ideals. This is not to suggest that the missionaries had a monopoly on these concepts. There were many other forces at work to democratize Armenian society, but the missionary programs contributed to these trends. The decade of the 1840s was a period of turmoil when the Armenian middle classes rebelled against the authority in the community exercised by the wealthy bankers and imperial office holders known as *amiras*. Speaking of the dissention within the Armenian community at the time, Hamlin explained:

> The people had begun to be restive under the rule of the bankers and the ecclesiastical primates. A very excited contest had arisen, in which the people had gained certain rights, which had been seized by this ruling party. This democratic spirit of freedom was extravagantly attributed to the influence of the missionaries, who had nothing directly to do with it.[16]

Writing in 1878 about the adoption of the Armenian constitution in the Ottoman Empire, Hamlin made a greater claim for Protestant influence: "From such movements as these, helped forward, incited and guided by some hundreds of Protestant organizations in the empire, a large amount of democratic freedom is enjoyed under a very despotic government."[17]

A third distinguishing feature of American missionary education was the inclusion of women. The missionaries believed female students should also have access to elementary education, for the ability to read and to interpret the Bible was just as important for girls as it was for boys. Indeed, it might even be more important because women were responsible for the religious upbringing of the children. The missionaries emphasized the higher education of women in order to train them as teachers. The educated men could be freed to become preachers and

---

[16] Ibid., pp. 283-84. The indirect influence of missionaries on the development of Armenian democratic and constitutional thought is described by Vartan Artinian, *The Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1863: A Study of Its Historical Development* (Istanbul, 1988), pp. 43-44.

[17] Hamlin, *Among the Turks,* p. 68.

pastors, while the women could teach in the classroom. Educated women were also needed to be proper wives for pastors and to serve as role models for the community. There was, however, a great deal of resistance at first in the Armenian communities to the idea of female teachers, particularly in rural areas, but gradually it gained acceptance.[18]

Cyrus Hamlin was interested in the Armenian Girls' Seminary in Constantinople, which opened in 1845, and for a few years it was located in Bebek, alongside the Boys' Seminary. Hamlin opposed the closing of the Girls' Seminary in the capital in 1862; years later, he strongly supported the establishment of its successor, the Constantinople College for Women, which opened its doors in 1871.[19]

The fourth distinguishing feature of missionary education for the Armenians was the introduction of the sciences, especially chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology, and botany. This was a novelty for educational establishments in the Near East where there had previously been little interest in these subjects. Elementary education in the sciences was important, the missionaries believed, in order to understand and appreciate God's creation. The Americans also used science for the practical purpose of attracting attention as well as students. Even before Hamlin's arrival in Turkey, Reverend Dwight was writing home for scientific apparatus—telescopes, microscopes, and the like.[20] Hamlin with his scientific bent carried such studies even further, and one can imagine him presenting scientific demonstrations before a curious public. One popular practice of the missionary schools was the examination held at the end of the year, during which parents and the public were invited to observe students giving talks, reciting poetry, performing experiments, and generally showing what they had learned.[21]

Within these broad parameters of educational principles, there were areas of disagreement. Hamlin was a firm advocate of what

---

[18] On education for women, see Stone, *Academies,* pp. 54-55.

[19] Keith M. Greenwood, *Robert College: The American Founders* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2000), pp. 175-77.

[20] Describing the early visitors to the American mission, Hamlin later wrote: "Many came from curiosity to see noted experiments in physics and chemistry." *My Life,* p. 228.

[21] John Freely, *A History of Robert College, the American College for Girls, and Boğaziçi University* (Istanbul: Yapi Kredi Yayinlari, 2000), vol. 1, p. 71.

is called today "vocational education." He believed that every student should learn a trade and that time spent by students in vocational education helped their overall academic performance. From a practical point of view, exercising a trade could also help students defray the cost of their education. As noted, it was mainly the poorer Armenians who took advantage of the missionary programs. Most students who attended Bebek Seminary did not pay tuition or board, but they were expected to provide their own clothes. Even this was too onerous for most students. As a result, Hamlin initiated a series of small businesses. Enlisting investment by some of his English acquaintances, he acquired equipment to teach the students how to make stove pipes and stoves, lasts and mousetraps, and he then became more ambitious with a bread-making business which was successful with the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1853. It was on a visit to a British hospital that Hamlin realized that men were suffering more from the Crimean lice than from their military wounds, and he began a laundry business, in the process of which, using beer kegs, he developed a prototype washing machine.[22]

All these endeavors, however, met with hostility from the other missionaries, who argued that such "secular" pursuits distracted the mission and encouraged the students to engage in business activities upon leaving school, rather than teaching and preaching. Hamlin's protests that this was the only way he could support and clothe the students fell on deaf ears. He claimed that he could not understand why his opponents considered it preferable for his students to wear tattered clothes and to beg rather than to work to earn an honest wage:

> I became fully convinced that two or three hours' work every day, leaving Saturday afternoon free for recreation, was promotive of studious habits, of good morals, and manly character. This industry went on very successfully for a few years, but it was an innovation, and like all innovations, whether good or bad, had to meet with opposition.[23]

At one point, the mission station voted that Hamlin should end all entrepreneurial activities. Hamlin replied that he would

---

[22] Hamlin, *Among the Turks,* pp. 212-14, 218-43.
[23] Hamlin, *My Life*, p. 265.

be pleased to do so, but that he would therefore have to give the responsibility for the clothing of his students to the station. His colleagues "agreed that Brother Hamlin take his own way to keep out rags."[24] Hamlin's motive in establishing these businesses was not only to aid the students but also to provide employment for Protestant families, whose excommunication by the Armenian Church often took away their sources of livelihood as well.

The end of the Crimean War in 1856 eased somewhat the situation of the Armenians. A new reform decree by the government, the *Hatt-i Humayun*, promised equality to all Ottoman subjects irrespective of their ethnicity or religion. Moreover, the war economy had provided an impetus to the economy and the availability of jobs. Hamlin now strategically retreated and disbanded his businesses or handed them over to his Armenian associates. When he came to balance his books, he found he had realized a profit of $25,000, a considerable sum in those days. The missionary society refused to accept the money, and therefore Hamlin set up a special church-building fund. Over subsequent decades, the money in this fund helped Evangelical Armenians living in various parts of the empire to acquire thirteen churches with attached schoolrooms.[25]

New Controversies about Education

More serious debates now emerged concerning the level of education to be provided and the use of English as a language of instruction in the higher academic levels. Rufus Anderson, the foreign secretary of the American Board, from his office in Boston developed in the 1850s a philosophy of missions according to which education should be limited to elementary instruction in the vernacular and provided only to the children of those parents who had already converted to the evangelical faith; English would not be taught under any circumstances. To Hamlin, all of this was nonsensical. He argued in vain that it would

---

[24] Ibid., p. 280.

[25] Ibid., pp. 280, 372. For example, according to Gates, *Not to Me Only*, pp. 138, 150, 168, Protestant churches in the Ottoman Empire had already been built or repaired earlier, out of the profits from Hamlin's industries, and proceeds from the bakery had provided the funds for purchase of the land on which Euphrates College was subsequently erected.

be impossible to provide a higher Western education without teaching students English and thereby opening to them the vast array of Christian literature. To be considered legitimate, Armenian pastors needed an education comparable to that of ministers in the United States, he argued. He himself had been responsible for the translation into Armenian of two basic textbooks, but he saw it as impossibly ambitious in the foreseeable future to translate all the necessary textbooks into the vernacular Armenian. Hamlin also realized that the educational programs represented a major instrument for attracting Armenians to the Protestant cause and that their curtailment would be extremely unpopular with the local population:

> In our field, and the same is true of every field where the gospel is preached to intelligent beings, we need disciplined and educated men. A general reformation has a tendency to produce them. This tendency should be aided, not repressed, and by the blessing of God we may raise up men more able and better qualified than ourselves to enter into the widening fields and reap the thickening harvests. In no other way can the reformation take root in the soil itself and spread its shadow over the land.[26]

Anderson's views prevailed at the time.[27] As Hamlin expressed it in his memoirs: "Dr. Anderson was a man of great power, and his errors were proportionably injurious."[28]

On one point both his supporters and opponents agreed: that Hamlin was a superb educator, dedicated to the welfare of his students. He spent a great deal of time with his young scholars (for example he regularly joined them for lunch) and established high educational standards, while at the same time taking into account individual differences. Graduates of Bebek Seminary became the pastors in the newly formed Evangelical churches as well as teachers; many others went on to distinguished careers in the

---

[26] Hamlin to Anderson, March 12, 1847, ABC: 16.7.1, Mission to the Armenians, vol. 12, "Letters from Constantinople Station" (Hamlin, no. 202).

[27] The curriculum debate of the 1850s is described in the ABCFM histories. See also the introduction by editor R Pierce Beaver to *To Advance the Gospel: Selection from the Writings of Rufus Anderson* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Erdmans, 1967), pp. 3-38; Greenwood, *Robert College*, pp. 70-73; Robert Alan Schneider, "The Senior Secretary: Rufus Anderson and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions," Ph.D. Diss., Harvard University, 1980.

[28] Hamlin, *My Life*, p. 414.

professions, in business, or in government service. Throughout the 1850s, however, criticism was leveled at the Bebek Seminary by the other missionaries for providing too high a level of education and for the fact that a significant number of its graduates traveled abroad for professional education, obtained jobs as interpreters, or went into business. In vain did Hamlin point out that no theological seminary produces all of its graduates for the ministry and that his seminary was the chief supplier of pastors for the evangelical churches in the interior, as well as a number of teachers and preachers.

Finally Hamlin realized that it had been decided in Boston to close both the male and female seminaries at Constantinople and to open them in the interior, on an entirely different basis. Weary of constant criticism and fully convinced that the educational system being developed was, in his words, "erroneous in principle, and must be disastrous in effect,"[29] Hamlin began to consider his options. Fortuitously, he found a new pursuit worthy of his talents and experiences. The New York businessman and philanthropist Christopher R. Robert had visited Constantinople in the late 1850s and met Hamlin. The two began a lively correspondence in which they explored the possibility of establishing an American college in Constantinople. Hamlin accordingly submitted his resignation to the American Board, effective in 1860, in order to turn his attention to the new project.

Cyrus Hamlin now had amassed more than two decades of experience as an educator in the Ottoman Empire. Although his work had been primarily among the Armenians, he had been in contact with other Christians, Muslims, and Jews and had become convinced that most of the problems in the society were the result of ignorance, superstition, and prejudice, all of which could be overcome by providing a liberal education to the new generation. In a lengthy paper written at this time, Hamlin argued that circumstances were driving the country to modernize. Though belonging to the past and clinging to tradition, Turkey was surrounded and penetrated by modern influences and found itself compelled to adopt European principles and modes of art, government, war, "and even its religious notions are being shaken out of their place." The previous year alone, 200 Turkish students had gone to Paris to study, and one steamer carried forty

[29] Hamlin, *Among the Turks*, pp. 283-84.

young Armenians abroad, all seeking a European education.

A new era was dawning in Turkey, and the practical question arose as to the role of the Protestant world in these new circumstances. Hamlin's answer was clear: "The first and at present the most important demand is a good Christian institution for general education—an institution bearing the character of a New England college." Many parents could not or would not send their children abroad, yet would welcome a Western institution in which they could have confidence. To support this contention, Hamlin argued that: 1) such an institution would find a rich pool of potential students in the large, diverse, multicultural population of the capital and could also attract students from other cities; 2) the "numerous and richly endowed Jesuit institutions of education" could not meet the demands of the country because their system "cramps and destroys rather than educates the mind"; 3) the schools established by the government were "wholly destitute of the requisite religious and moral elements" and would not for a long time "supercede the necessity of institutions conducted by men of European training and habits of teaching"; 4) an institution of learning which combined "sound mental discipline" with science and Christianity would not only accomplish a great good on its own, but would provide a model to be widely emulated, even as missionary schools had exerted a significant influence on the general development of education; and 5) it was the duty of Protestant Christianity to provide such an institution to Turkey. Using mainly the English, French, and Turkish languages, this institution would be open to Turks, Bulgarians, Greeks, Armenians, Romanians, Kurds, and Jews. Hamlin concluded:

> Such a Christian educational institution as we propose would be a constant and steady light to thousands of minds, in regard to the true nature of Christianity, which the missionary cannot at present approach. Its secular constitution would give it a weight and an authority in certain minds which would be armed with suspicion against any missionary institution. It would be a new demonstration of what our faith is, which the Oriental world greatly needs. It would be a new ally in the work, a new force common to the field of battle in the midst of the conflict, fresh and unwearied, to choose it position and decide the day.[30]

---

[30] "Educational Institutions and English Literature for Turkey," ABC: 16.7.1, vol. 12, "Letters from Constantinople Station" (Hamlin, #269). The document is

The idea of establishing an American college in Turkey was not original with Hamlin. It had been first suggested by the Reverend Dwight's two sons, James and William, who had grown up in Constantinople and received their higher education in the United States. They had discussed the idea with Christopher Robert, who was intrigued with the plan but put off by their suggestion that the institution be secular in nature. Robert also doubted that the Dwight brothers possessed the necessary experience.[31] On the other hand, Hamlin appeared perfectly qualified for the task, and his concept of a Christian institution which would be independent and non-sectarian appealed to Robert. Once free from his ABCFM duties, Hamlin threw himself into the new project with his customary vigor and enthusiasm. The first step was to find an appropriate site for the college, and this proved to be much more difficult than anticipated. Hamlin discovered the ideal spot high on a hill just above the historic Rumeli Hisar fortress, only about half a mile from the Bebek Seminary—a magnificent site with an unsurpassed view of the Bosphorus, the narrow strait that connects the Black Sea with the Sea of Marmara. Convinced that this site was not available, he examined twenty-four possible locations, according to his memoirs, before property was purchased at Kurucheshme.[32]

Hamlin now returned to the United States to raise money for the new institution. The timing was unfortunate, however, for he arrived in Boston in September 1860, when the turbulent conditions that were to lead to the Civil War made serious fundraising impossible. Robert, however, unwilling to give up so quickly, placed additional funds at Hamlin's disposal to begin construction of the college. On his return to Constantinople, Hamlin found the situation changed: Sultan Abdul Mejid had died, and as a result of the ensuing political changes the owner of the Hisar land found himself in dire financial straits and was anxious to sell. Hamlin quickly agreed to purchase what he had considered the perfect site, and a few months later obtained

---

not dated, but it was received in Boston on May 30, 1857.

[31] Hamlin's biographers, Marcia and Malcolm Stevens, suggest that it was an Armenian graduate of Bebek Seminary, Christopher Der Seropian, who had convinced the Dwights to make the college a secular one and to exclude religious exercises. Seropian was a classmate of the Dwights at Yale University. Stevens, *Against the Devil's Current*, pp. 243-44.

[32] Hamlin, *My Life*, p. 415.

official permission from the Ottoman Ministry of Education to found a college.[33]

Now, however, another obstacle appeared; despite his efforts, he could not obtain the necessary building permit. Frustrated by being so close to achieving his goal yet unable to proceed, Hamlin now took advantage of his many years of experience in Turkey. Bebek Seminary, which he had founded and directed for so many years, had been moved to Marsovan, and its former building was left vacant. Hamlin reached an arrangement with the ABCFM to use this building temporarily for the college, and the basic principle of *adet* or custom in Ottoman law worked in his favor: since an American institution had been functioning on that site for so many years, the government could not legally prevent its continued use for that same purpose. In the fall of 1863, with a program printed in five languages and a freshman class of four members, the new college opened. Unable to settle on a name for the new institution, Hamlin had come up with Robert College, in honor of the establishment's chief sponsor, and the name was adopted over Robert's protests. By the end of the academic year, the student body had grown to 20; by the end of the second academic year, there were 28 students (including 4 Greeks, 1 Armenian, and 1 Bulgarian); and at the end of the third academic year, the 51 students included 20 Armenians, 9 Bulgarians, and 6 Greeks; the fourth year enrollment of 96 students was made up of 19 Armenians, 9 Bulgarians, and 6 Greeks. The fifth academic year saw the first two graduates: the Armenian Hagopos Djedjizian, who went on to a long and distinguished teaching career at the college, and the Bulgarian Petco Gorbanoff, who subsequently enjoyed a prominent political career in Bulgaria.[34]

The Building of a New Campus

Soon after the first graduation exercises, a seemingly unrelated event took place that had an impact on the fate of the college. The U.S. European naval squadron, commanded by Admiral David Farragut, arrived at the Turkish capital in August 1868. At the

---

[33] Ibid., pp. 425-31.

[34] George Washburn, *Fifty Years in Constantinople* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), p. 305; Freely, *History*, p. 71.

urging of his young son Alfred, Hamlin visited the admiral and spoke with him about his difficulties concerning the college, following which Farragut apparently raised the issue in his meetings with Turkish officials. Three months later, Hamlin was astonished to learn that not only had official authorization been granted to build the college on the Hisar site but also that permission had come in the form of an imperial *irade*, which granted the right of extraterritoriality to the land, so that Robert College was allowed to fly the American flag and enjoyed diplomatic immunities. Apparently the Turkish officials viewed this as a small concession to the United States to ensure its good offices in the empire's foreign policy problems, particularly with Greece over the issue of Crete. Hamlin was to encounter no further obstacles from the government during construction. In the spring of 1869 excavations for the college building began; on July 5 of that year the cornerstone was laid; in May 1871 students occupied the building; and on July 4 of that year the official opening took place, with former American Secretary of State William E. Seward as the featured speaker.[35]

During the construction, Hamlin was not limited to the role of college president but also assumed the responsibilities of architect, engineer, and contractor. Stories abound in the literature about his activities in this period, which are well summarized in the description provided by his son-in-law, George Washburn, who had been drafted to help administer the college and was soon to succeed Hamlin as president:

> During those years, while the work of construction was going on, Dr. Hamlin was always at Hisar, but one never knew where to find him. He might be in the water at the bottom of the well mending the force pump, or at the top of the building standing on an iron girder with forty feet of empty space below him. He might be setting up a steam-engine or doctoring a horse or teaching his masons how to lay stone. He might be entertaining some Turkish gentleman or using his rich vocabulary of invective on some wild Kurdish laborer. He made a sort of hut for himself in a pile of lumber near the building, and you might find him there taking a five minutes' nap in his chair or sharing his meager lunch with a tailless green lizard which had made friends with him. If you came at the right time, you might be

[35] Hamlin, *My Life*, pp. 435-52, 468-78.

> treated to a delicious cup of coffee made by himself. You might see him . . . tenderly dressing the wounds of some unfortunate workman. Wherever you found him, you saw that his whole mind and heart was concentrated upon the building. He had endless difficulties, but was never discouraged and never daunted by any new and unthought-of problem which presented itself in the building. I think that those were the happiest days of his life.[36]

Constructing the building proved to be an easier task than developing the curriculum. Students came from various backgrounds and with different levels of preparation: Hamlin divided them between a preparatory department and the college proper but did not have a set list of courses to be taken every year. In the fall, he would sit down with the staff and determine which students were to be prepared for graduation that year. It was the system Hamlin had always used, and it was appropriate for a small student body. The college directors in the United States, however, including most importantly Robert, were distressed by the lack of organization. Washburn complained in letters to the Trustees about Hamlin's seemingly haphazard administration, but later in his memoirs he admitted that "we have no graduates who have distinguished themselves in later life more than those who were under Dr. Hamlin's personal influence." Hamlin had, according to Washburn, "a marvelous power of impressing his own personality on his students," he "lived with the students, ate at the same table, and managed, in spite of the variety of his occupations, to see much of them."[37] Language issues were ever-present. Hamlin believed that the basic language of instruction should be English, supplemented by the native languages (mainly Turkish, Greek, Armenian, and Bulgarian).[38] This left no space in the curriculum for the classical languages of Latin and

---

[36] Washburn, *Fifty Years*, pp. 28-29.

[37] Ibid., p. 37.

[38] On this question, Hamlin disagreed with his colleague, Dr. Daniel Bliss, who founded Syrian Protestant College (later the American University of Beirut) in 1866 and at first used the missionary model of teaching in the native languages. Washburn visited Beirut in 1874 and was severely critical of the use of Arabic, reporting to Robert that "all the professors believe that this is a mistake and a calamity." Robert conceded in reply that he had been critical of Hamlin on the language issue but now he was "becoming reconciled to our multiplicity of tongues." Correspondence quoted in Greenwood, *Robert College*, pp. 150-51.

Greek. The college trustees in the United States, on the other hand, dominated by chairman Robert, insisted on following the American models and including the classics in the curriculum.

Another series of disagreements between Hamlin and the college trustees revolved around attitudes toward the native peoples and the degree of responsibility given them. This was a serious issue in the American missionary movement in general, and particularly among the Armenians. Although the avowed rationale of the Americans for working among the Christian peoples in the Ottoman Empire was to train co-workers for the long-term goal of converting (they would use the term "saving") Muslims and Jews, they were remarkably reluctant to assign responsibility to the native helpers. Armenians resented this policy and became increasingly restive under the control exercised by the Americans. The gradual replacement of the first experienced generation of American missionaries in Turkey by newer recruits exacerbated the problem. Hamlin stood out among his colleagues for his willingness to assign responsibility to local leaders. Earlier, in 1854, Hamlin's name had been conspicuously absent from a petition submitted to Boston by members of the Constantinople mission, protesting against the rumored assignment to their mission of an Ottoman Armenian then completing his higher education in the United States; the petitioners expressed alarm that an Armenian might have equal status with the Americans or be paid the same salary.[39]

A similar situation arose in 1872 when Hagopos Djedjizian was named adjunct professor of ancient and modern Armenian. One of the first two graduates of the college in 1868, Djedjizian became the first local person to be appointed professor. Robert had initially opposed Hamlin on this appointment but finally acquiesced, probably for financial reasons, since American faculty members were considerably more expensive.[40]

---

[39] This remarkable petition concludes with the recommendation that the Armenian be assigned instead to India, where "he will undoubtedly do much good." Greenwood, *Robert College*, pp. 73-75.

[40] The views of Robert on the subject of Hagopos Djedjizian's appointment display a remarkably negative attitude toward the individuals being educated at the college:

> I never had any idea that the native teachers would take part in the government of the college. Perhaps 50 or 100 years hence, they may take part in the administration but even then the objectionable elements of their character

Another aspect of this problem appears in financial issues. Hamlin strongly advocated a self-supporting institution whose costs would be covered by tuition, fees, and local fund-raising. This not only satisfied his New England sense of frugality, but it also insured that the local population would embrace the institution as its own. The trustees proposed establishing an endowment in the United States that would provide the income for three professors. Hamlin argued that such an arrangement would make the college too independent and isolated from its environment. It was a problem the missionaries were encountering in Constantinople over the question of who was to control the Protestant churches, a dispute that ended up in the courts. In Hamlin's mind, the problem came from trying to impose from above what ought to have come from below:

> I have a great horror of that independence which the younger missionaries contend for as the only condition of having a Christian college. This independence allowed them to trample with impunity upon those laws of human nature which will in some way or another finally avenge themselves. They have seen the missionary cause finally in the grave here and are now fighting in the courts and in the public newspapers causing public astonishment and scandal. Well, they have abstract right on their side but they have sacrificed all the sympathies of the people. . . . The entire Protestant body . . . would vote the missionaries away if they could. . . . Now manage a college so as to sacrifice the sympathies of the scholars and parents and trample upon their prejudices, despise requests which to the petitioners seem reasonable, rebuke them with anger and lofty disdain, threaten them with expulsion if they don't think and act just as you do, and you will empty any college very soon.[41]

---

will, I fear, not be so diminished as not to render a large share of American brains necessary, but that is too far in the future for profitable discussion. As to how long native teachers should be retained, I cannot of course tell, but my impression is that . . . it will not be wise to keep them over 3 or 4 years. Men who are so sensitive as to their honor so as to always be on the alert lest their associate encroach upon their dignity, are always troublesome and often so occupied in guarding their honor as to neglect important duties to others.
Letter to Washburn, Feb. 19, 1872, quoted in Greenwood, *Robert College*, p. 173.

[41] Hamlin to Robert, May 15, 1869, quoted in Greenwood, *Robert College*, pp. 126-27.

Protestant Christian or Non-Sectarian?

The confidence of the Constantinople Armenian community in Robert College was severely shaken as a result of disputes over religious policy. Hamlin had placed great importance on the college's independence from the sectarianism represented by the ABCFM, but he was adamant that it should be Christian in character. A controversy over the religious nature of the college arose during its first years. Two young American professors, the Reverends Henry A. Schauffler and George A. Perkins, had been appointed to the faculty, and after one year of teaching under Hamlin's direction, they mounted a major attack on his capability as college president. At the heart of their displeasure was what they described as an anti-missionary policy, but what we might consider today Hamlin's religious toleration. The college constitution stipulated that "all the students shall attend religious services unless for special and imperative reasons some are excused by the faculty and teachers." The two faculty members had discovered, however, that Hamlin was permitting students to absent themselves from religious services at the college in order to attend their own churches or synagogues (There were no Muslim students at this time, and therefore no mention was made of mosques). Hamlin had done this arbitrarily, without consulting them, they charged, and he was violating the basic evangelizing mission of the college. Hamlin had gone too far in disassociating the college from the mission, they argued:

> When the *Levant Herald* spoke of the college as the representative of the American mission, Dr. Hamlin was greatly disturbed and wrote the Herald strongly disavowing any connection with any mission society. This was well enough. But he closed by saying that although Robert College was a Christian rather than a Mohammedan institution, it was entirely non sectarian in character and principle. We felt that instead of covering up our Protestant character . . . that we ought rather . . . to reveal that our aim . . . is the same as that of the missionaries, viz, the evangelization of Turkey.[42]

How many students were involved or to what faiths they

[42] Letter, H.A. Schauffler to Robert, Nov. 29, 1864, quoted in Greenwood, *Robert College*, p. 88.

belonged is not mentioned. This dispute ended when Robert expressed his complete confidence in Hamlin as college president, and Schauffler and Perkins resigned. Apparently, Hamlin continued to exhibit a tolerant attitude toward other religions, and the college gained a reputation as a place that afforded students from the disparate national groups of the Ottoman Empire a neutral ground. Regardless of their religious and national affiliations, they came together in the common pursuit of knowledge. The tenth academic year had closed in the spring of 1873 with a total enrollment of 257, of which by far the largest group, 98, consisted of Armenians, with 48 Greeks, 38 Bulgarians, and 73 of various other minorities.

No sooner had Hamlin left Constantinople in September 1873, ostensibly to try to raise an endowment in the United States, than George Washburn, who had been left in charge, faced a major crisis on the religious front. In October 1873, Washburn received a letter signed by eleven Armenian students who refused to attend Bible classes, "considering that the commentaries on the Bible will not be in strict conformity with the especial doctrines of the Armenian church." Seeing this as a direct attack on the religious program of the college, Washburn refused to permit exemption since such a move "would involve the cessation of all moral instruction in the college without which we believe no institution of learning can secure the favor of God or man." The result was the departure of twenty-six Armenian students, which was serious enough, but also led to a great commotion in the community. The students did not hesitate to explain their position in the Armenian press, asserting that the college curriculum was designed to "make them Protestants" and calling upon parents "who feel any interest in their own church" to "remove their sons to our national schools." The students asserted: "It was impossible for us to believe that so celebrated an American institution in Turkey would ever be the means of violating the freedom of conscience." As one historian of Robert College has pointed out, these students demonstrated that they had learned their lessons well. "To be required, as communicants of the Armenian Orthodox church, to participate in the prayers of the American Congregationalists, struck them as a violation of the very religious liberties they were hearing about from their teachers." Nine of the twenty-six students returned after petitioning Washburn. The next year, in 1874, there were only thirty-two

Armenian students, and it took several years before they attained their earlier percentage of the student body.[43]

The numbers of Bulgarian students increased after 1872 with the appointment to the faculty of Albert Long, who had been for many years a missionary in Bulgaria. The college became associated with efforts to publicize Muslim "atrocities" in Bulgaria, particularly in the British press. This led to a political crisis in Turkey in 1877-78. Hamlin, who had returned to the United States by this time, was distressed by the situation and insisted that the college must remain aloof from any subversive political activity. As a missionary, Hamlin had been a strong advocate of programs among the Bulgarians, describing this as a most promising field of service, but he now cautioned against any political involvement by the college. Individuals who wished to work for Bulgarian independence were free to do so, he argued, but the college as an institution chartered by the Turkish government must make every effort to separate itself from politics in general and from support for Bulgarian separatism in particular.[44]

Always antagonistic to Russia, Hamlin did not believe that the break-up of the Ottoman Empire would serve any useful purpose. In one letter, he expressed astonishment that any missionary could "make such an ass of himself as to wish Russia in Constantinople." He made fun of the oratory of the Liberal Prime Minister William E. Gladstone in England. "War cannot heal the diseases of Turkey," which were identified as "ignorance, superstition, bigotry, and fanaticism" in a letter Hamlin wrote to Robert in 1875. By this time, however, Washburn was in control of the college. He and Long (along with prominent Bulgarian graduates of the college) were generally recognized as the prime movers in the campaign that culminated in the autonomy of an enlarged Bulgaria by the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878 and, although somewhat smaller in area, confirmed by the Congress of Berlin later that same year.[45] Fortunately for the col-

---

[43] The controversy is described in Greenwood, *Robert College*, pp. 183-88.

[44] Ibid., pp. 203-06.

[45] The debate is discussed in Greenwood, *Robert College*, pp. 192-208, 216-22; Stevens, *Against the Devil's Current*, pp. 381-406. Years later, Washburn was to deny his role: "I did not create Bulgaria . . . and never encouraged the Bulgarians . . . to rebel against the Turkish government." In contrast, British Ambassador Sir Edwin Pears commented: "I know of no other instance in history where a single institution has so powerfully affected the life of a nation as Robert College has affected

lege, the government did not retaliate after the dust of war had settled. These circumstances, however, branded Robert College as a distinctly Christian institution and hindered it from playing the kind of enlightening role for the Muslim or Turkish population that Hamlin had envisioned. There were no Turkish students enrolled until the early twentieth century.

Against his wishes, in 1873 Hamlin had been brought home to the United States by Robert to raise funds for a college endowment. Little did he realize that he would be prevented from returning to Turkey and forced to resign as president four years later. Hamlin did not like raising money (which he compared to "begging") and did not think he was good at it. He had failed in fund-raising before, once in 1860 on the eve of the Civil War and again in 1871. As Robert increasingly exhibited a tendency to place more responsibility for running the college in the hands of the methodical Washburn rather than the unpredictable Hamlin, the latter proposed undertaking a new project, the establishment of a women's college, only to be brushed aside by an impatient Robert. As he had predicted, Hamlin was not able to raise the necessary funds to place the college on a solid financial footing, and while he crisscrossed the country on speaking tours, Washburn was consolidating his position in Constantinople.[46] To calm Washburn's apprehensions about the financial future of the college, Robert assured him confidentially that he would continue to fund the college for as long as he lived whether an endowment was raised or not and that he would provide for the college generously in his will; at the same time Robert cautioned Washburn not to divulge this to anyone, for fear of undermining Hamlin's fund-raising efforts. Finally, in a bitter showdown in Robert's New York City office in the fall of 1875, Robert informed Hamlin that he was not to return to Constantinople.[47]

---

the life of Bulgaria" (both quotations from Stevens, p. 405).

[46] Washburn later argued that the failure to raise an endowment at this time could be explained by the fact that the institution was named after Robert, and people therefore expected Robert to fund it. Moreover, "no man in New York was more universally respected nor more universally admired than Mr. Robert but he was not a popular man." Washburn also pointed out that the frequently stated argument of Robert and Hamlin that the college could and should be self-supporting was self-defeating. If the college was to be self-supporting, what was the rationale for an endowment? Washburn, *Fifty Years*, pp. 59-60.

[47] Hamlin, *My Life*, pp. 502-04.

Hamlin was bitterly disappointed that he could not realize his dream of continuing the work in Turkey and ending his life there, to be buried next to his first wife and two deceased children. He had to earn a living to support himself and his family. Throughout his missionary career he had always taken a minimal salary and never thought about saving for his retirement. Hamlin now accepted preaching invitations and began to write his memoir, *Among the Turks*, which enjoyed a modest success. In the fall of 1877, he accepted a position as professor of theology at his alma mater, Bangor Seminary, for three years, and then served as president of Middlebury College in Vermont for five years. His success in transforming Middlebury College from an almost bankrupt establishment with falling enrollments, an obsolete curriculum, and decaying plant into a prosperous and highly regarded institution provides a vindication of his abilities as a college administrator. "There is no question that Middlebury's gain was a profound loss for Robert College," writes Hamlin's biographer.[48] Hamlin then retired to Lexington, Massachusetts, where he continued his writing, public speaking, and preaching until his death, in 1900, at the age of 89. At his funeral, two of the four speakers were Armenians (Hagop Arakelyan and Dr. M.A. Melcon) and six Armenian men served as pallbearers. Engraved on Hamlin's tombstone in the Lexington cemetery are the following words: "This monument of granite from Maine, his native state, is erected by his Armenian friends in gratitude for his enduring and devoted services to their people."[49]

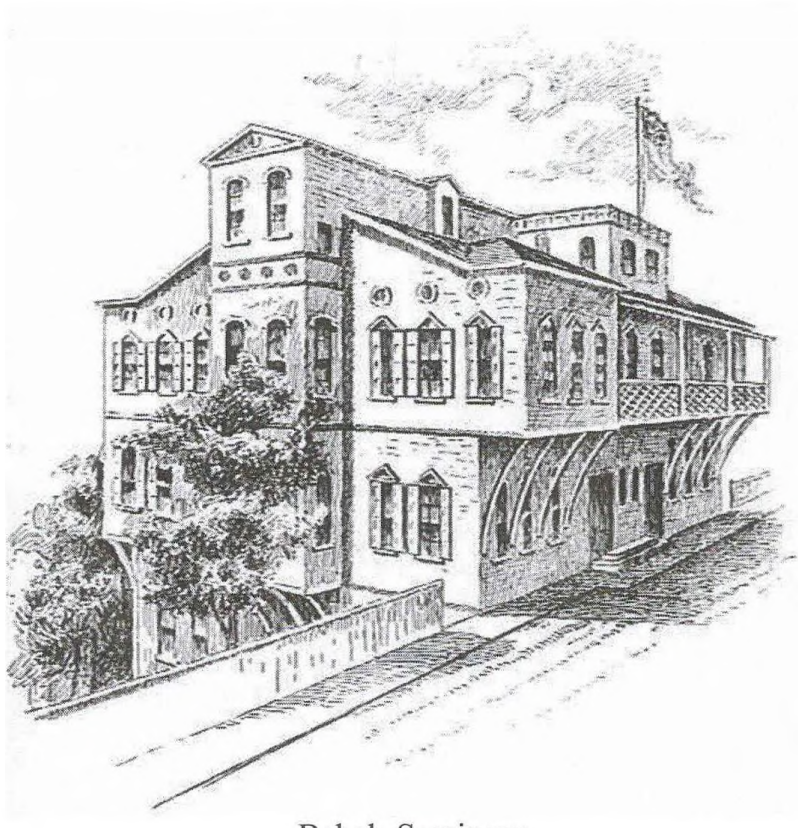
* * *

Cyrus Hamlin lost the argument in the mid-nineteenth century over the importance of higher education in missions and over including economic and social programs for the betterment of the people. But he lived long enough to see his ideas triumph; indeed, he himself helped those ideas triumph by the success of his initiative to establish an American college in the Near East, an effort that inspired the establishment of the American Univer-

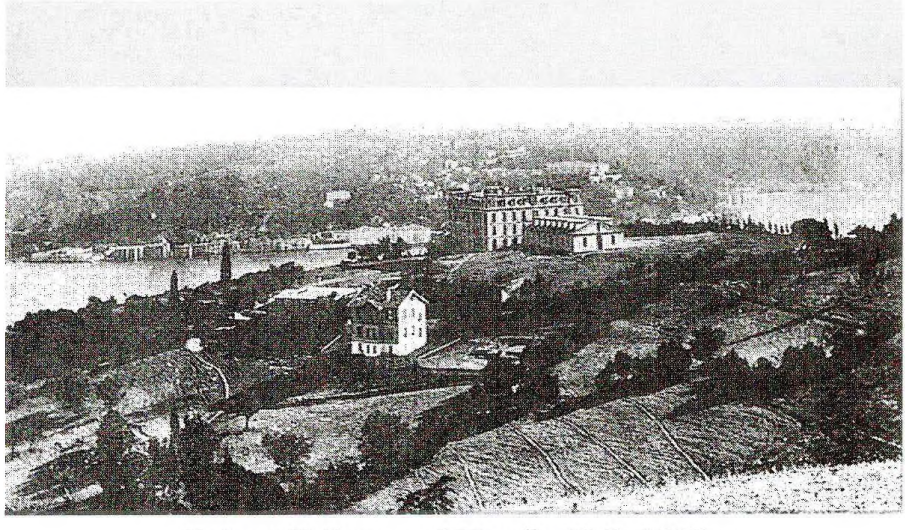
[48] Stevens, *Against the Devil's Current*, pp. 434-53. Given Hamlin's strong advocacy of higher education for women in the Ottoman Empire, it is not surprising that during his presidency women were first admitted to Middlebury College.

[49] Ibid., pp. 473-78.

sity of Beirut only four years later and of a network of American higher educational institutions in the Ottoman Empire, including Euphrates College, Anatolia College, Central Turkey College, and Tarsus Institute. Perhaps an analogous missionary impulse remains today in American activities abroad, now almost completely devoid of religious content (which Hamlin would have regretted) and focused on economic, social, and democratic reform (which Hamlin would have applauded). This missionary who spent more than thirty years of his life in Constantinople as an educator working mainly with the Armenians left an indelible mark on the development of American activism abroad dedicated to creating opportunities to achieve a better life for the peoples of the Near East and around the world.

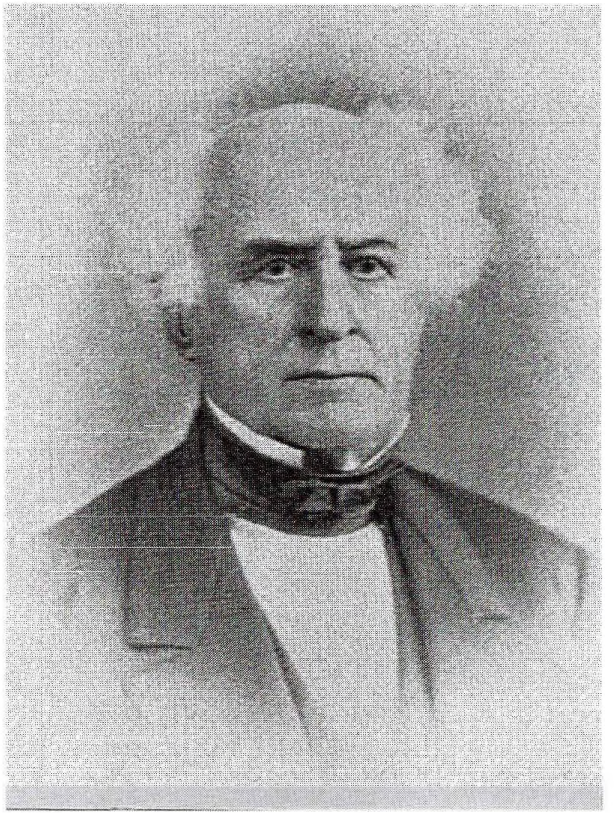


Bebek Seminary



Robert College and Hamlin Hall, 1870s

Cyrus Hamlin



Christopher Robert

George Washburn

Robert College Seniors, 1880s